THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI S. GANDHISELVAN): (a) to (c) The matter of parity of Physiotherapists with MBBS and BDS was examined by the Vth Central Pay Commission and not agreed to. The educational qualification and the nature of duties of Physiotherapists are not comparable to those of MBBS doctors and BDS (Dental Surgeons). Further, the Physiotherapists like medical practitioners do not diagnose, investigate, prescribe, treat and follow up patients with various diseases. The Physiotherapists are required to take the advice of doctors with in regard to starting of physiotherapy or occupational therapy and continuing such treatment.

Shortage of typhoid vaccine

1288. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that there is acute shortfall of vaccines in the country;

(b) whether Government is also aware that this shortage has occurred due to closure of three important laboratories in the country;

(c) whether Government is also aware that the vaccine particularly typhoid vaccine has not been available for the last six months; and

(d) if so, the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) and (b) There is no shortage of Vaccines under Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in the country at present. However, for some months in 2008, there were shortages of Diptheria-Pertusis-Tetanus (DPT), Tetanus Toxoid (TT) and Diptheria Tetanus (DT) in some States due to non-fulfillment of supply commitments by manufacturers. These were overcome by October, 2008, and since then there have been no shortages.

(c) and (d) Vaccination for typhoid is not a part of Universal Immunization Programme.

Food Regulatory Authority

1289. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has recently set up Food Regulatory Authority (FRA) and appointed representatives of food giants as members of its key scientific panels;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the interest of consumers are at risk as major food giants have been nominated on the watch dog body;

(d) if so, the reasons of appointing representatives of food giants on FRA; and

(e) how the interest of consumers would be protected?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) to (e) The Government has established Food Safety and Standards Authority of India under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 consisting of 23 members including Chairperson of the Food Authority and appointed independent scientific experts as members of its scientific panels.

The scientific experts in these panels have been selected according to the approved procedures. With a view to bring together the best scientific expertise available in the country for forming scientific opinions, Scientists have been selected as members of the Panels/Committee in their individual capacity of being a scientist and an expert in their respective fields irrespective of their present association or affiliation with any public or private sector organisation. This is in accordance with the international practice followed in respect of Committees requiring high level expertise on any specific subject.

An elaborate procedure has been laid down to manage conflict of interest. The members of the Scientific Committee and Panels are required to submit an annual declaration of interest and declaration of any possible conflict of interest before each meeting of the Scientific Committee and panels. Whenever a conflict of interest is established, Chairman of the panel/Committee is required to exclude such a scientist from consideration of items in the agenda.

Thus an elaborate conflict of interest procedure has been introduced in this standard setting body (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) in the interest of absolute transparency and objectivity.

The guidelines to Scientific Panels and Committee make it very clear that having an interest in a particular scientific issue does not necessarily mean a conflict of interest. In fact, keen intellectual interest in scientific issues is a pre-condition for participation in such Committee and Panels. It is based on the recognition that any scientist can contribute to scientific knowledge and safety of food, if discussions and conclusions are based on reliable scientific evidence, open discussion and rigorous validation procedures.

The Scientific Panels will provide scientific opinion to the Food Authority which would be reviewed by the Scientific Committee and the final decision would be taken by the Food Authority consisting of members from various stakeholders including the consumer organizations.

Specialists for treatment of infectious diseases

1290. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:
SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state: